




CASA volunteers are ...

... people just like you who volunteer for one of the most satisfying occupations of their lives: advocating for foster children who are too frightened or overwhelmed to speak for themselves in court.

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs)

learn all they can about a child's life and circumstances in order to make the best possible recommendation to the Dependency Court judge about living arrangements, school and healthcare. They also monitor the court's orders, following through with foster parents, educators, social workers, medical staff and other community partners. **Most crucially, CASAs provide a consistent adult figure in the child's life—perhaps the only stable, reliable person the child has ever known.**



“I have seen CASA volunteers help find services for children that I was told were not available and I have seen them find permanent placements for children when our system faltered in that regard. In many instances, the efforts of CASA volunteers were absolutely heroic.”

Judge Michael Nash
Presiding Judge,
Los Angeles Juvenile Court, CA
Treasurer, National Council of
Juvenile and Family Court Judges



Invest in CASA today

Your support today can help save your community thousands of dollars tomorrow. Help us empower children lost in the dependency court system to become contributing members of society.

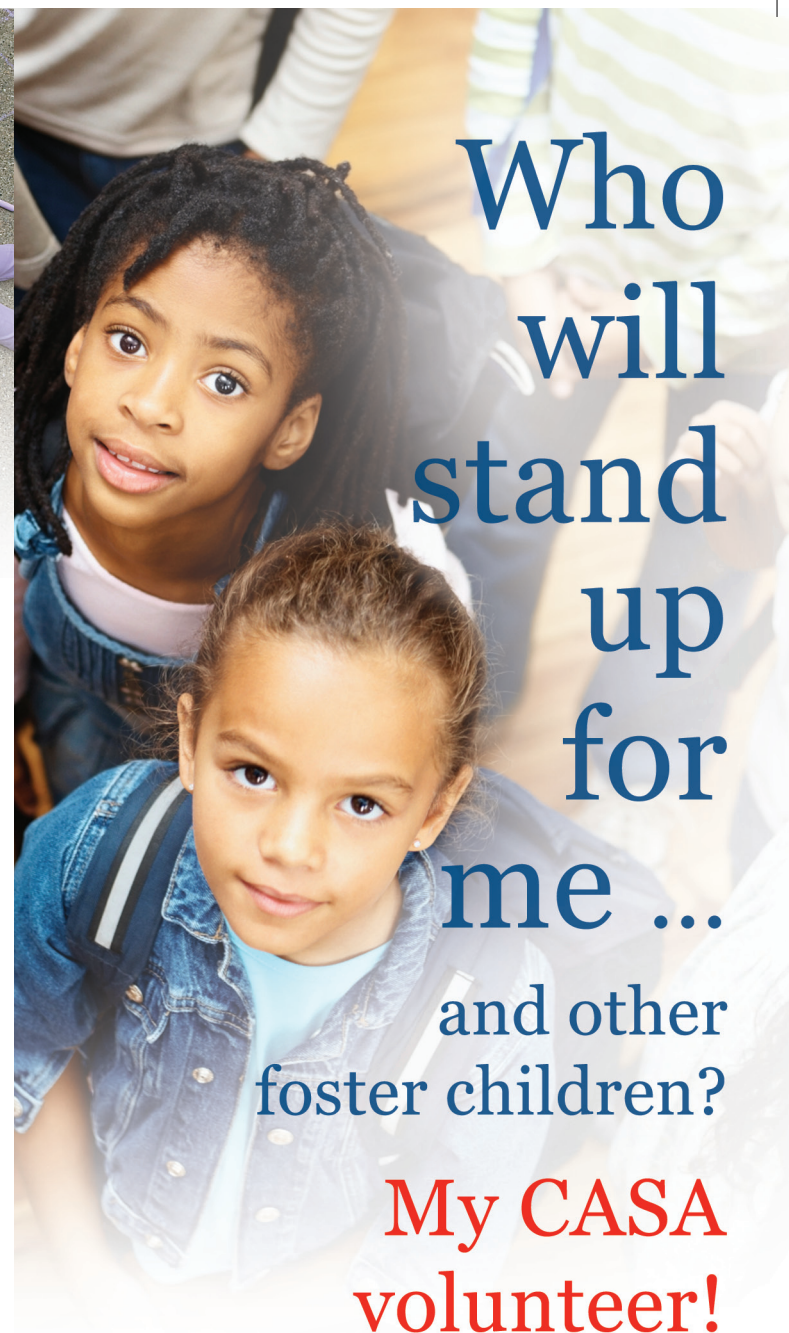
*It could be the greatest
gift—or time—you ever spend.*

Join us, won't you?

CASA of Los Angeles' mission is to improve the lives of children in the dependency court system through trained, dedicated, and effective volunteer advocates who are professionals supported by experienced staff.

To support CASA—or become a volunteer—please visit **www.casala.org** or send your **tax deductible contribution to:**

CASA of Los Angeles
Edmund D. Edelman
Children's Court
201 Centre Plaza Drive, Rm 1100
Monterey Park, CA 91754-2142
Phone: 323.526.6666
Tax ID #95-3890446



“If it weren’t for my CASA, I would probably have dropped out of high school, but she was there to encourage me to think about my future.”

- Former CASA child, now 20



CASA of Los Angeles, founded in 1978, is part of a nationwide CASA movement and is the **only** program where volunteers are appointed by the court to act in each child’s best interest.

In the past year, CASA of Los Angeles advocated for more than 500 of the most vulnerable at-risk children in more than 7,000 court proceedings. These children were attended, one-on-one, by their CASAs for an average of two years each.

All CASA volunteers receive extensive training and staff support, enabling them to navigate the children’s court system and advocate effectively on behalf of the children they serve.

Our goal is to see these children safely reunited with their family, matched with the best possible permanent foster family, or successfully adopted.



Make a Profound Gift

There’s no substitute for a consistent, stable adult presence in a child’s life to help that child turn his life around—and it all begins with YOU.

State budget cuts have dramatically affected our funding. *Your donation today* will help us sustain current initiatives and expand our programs. Please pledge online at www.casala.org/donate, or send your gift to the address on the reverse side.

Your donation goes a long way

85% of each dollar you give to CASA of Los Angeles goes directly to recruit, train and supervise CASA volunteers and to fund workshops for staff and volunteers to address children’s special needs.

Your gifts are allocated to help hundreds of children forge their future in LA’s dependency court every year. We keep you apprised of our accomplishments through our website, e-mails, and newsletters.

www.casala.org

Become a CASA Volunteer

People from all walks of life, employed or retired, are enthusiastic about the impact they make on young lives as a CASA volunteer.

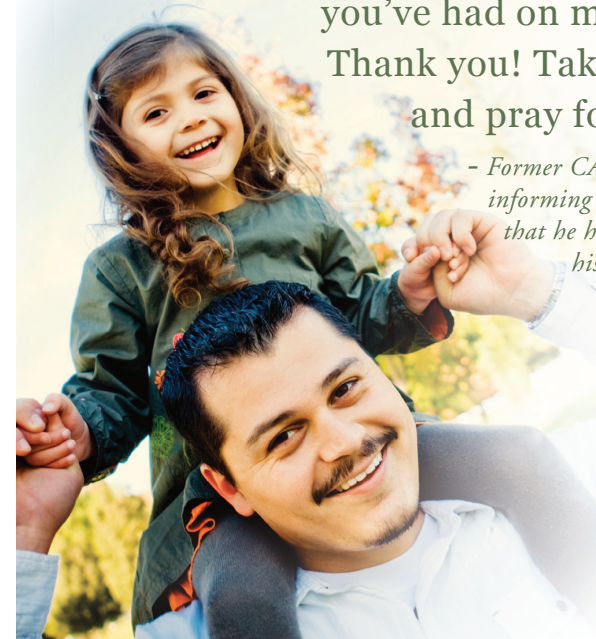
Your advocacy efforts are supported through up-front training, staff assistance, a network of CASAs, and ongoing trainings in topics ranging from the Dependency Court Process to Resources for Disabilities. It can be one of the most meaningful experiences you’ll ever have.

Volunteer Today - CALL

Monterey Park at 323.526.6666 or
Antelope Valley at 661.723.2272

“I’ll never be able to express the overwhelming significance you’ve had on my life. Thank you! Take care and pray for us.”

- Former CASA child, informing his CASA that he had named his daughter after her.



CASA of Los Angeles Fact Sheet

CASA of Los Angeles...

Supports volunteers who help abused and neglected foster children in court and the community.

A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)...

is a trained and supervised volunteer, appointed by a judge to advocate for a foster child – a child who is under the court's protection because of abuse or neglect. A CASA volunteer gathers information, writes reports, and makes recommendations to the judge in the child's best interests.

Funds raised by CASA of Los Angeles underwrite the training of CASA volunteers, the support services CASA volunteers need to make a difference in these children's lives, and directly provide assistance to abused and neglected children.

CASA of Los Angeles Serves...

approximately 500 foster children each year. They are of all ages, races and ethnicities. Since CASA volunteers are typically assigned the most challenging cases, many "CASA kids" have learning disabilities, physical disabilities, severe emotional and mental problems.

CASA of Los Angeles Statistics:

- Established in 1978
- 369 volunteers
- 15 professional program staff
- 569 children with individual Child Advocates in 2009
- Annual spending of \$2,000 per child in 2009
- 25,000 foster children in Los Angeles County in 2009

CASA of Los Angeles Leadership:

CASA volunteers make a difference in the lives of foster children, one child at a time, by ensuring they receive the support and help they deserve. Studies have shown that children with CASAs receive more assistance and support than children without. When a foster child has a CASA, that child has a consistent adult guaranteeing that the child's needs are heard and addressed in court. The CASA volunteer is often the most stable presence in a foster child's life and for many foster children, the CASA volunteer is the only person who is not paid to care for them. CASA volunteers bring the voice of the community into a child welfare system that is often overly bureaucratic and legalistic.

Who We Are:

CASA of Los Angeles is currently a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The Los Angeles Superior Court created CASA of Los Angeles in 1978, making it one of the first five CASA programs in the nation. Friends of CASA was created in 1983 to raise funds to support the program as a public/private partnership.

In 2010 CASA of Los Angeles became a totally private self-sustaining 501(c)(3) non-profit organization operating the CASA program and raising all its own funds. The work of CASA volunteers is authorized and regulated by California law and standards established by the National CASA Association.

CASA of Los Angeles Leadership:

Dilys Tosteson Garcia, Executive Director, CASA of Los Angeles

Bruce Herron, Board President, CASA of Los Angeles

For additional information about CASA of Los Angeles visit www.casala.org or call (323) 526-6666.

Send Donations to:

CASA of Los Angeles, 201 Centre Plaza Drive, #3, Monterey Park, CA 91754



"A powerful voice for children in foster care."

CASA Volunteer Fact Sheet

What is a CASA?

A Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) is a trained community volunteer who is appointed by a judge to advocate on behalf of a foster child in court. All of the children are victims of abuse or neglect.

What does a CASA volunteer do?

A CASA volunteer spends time with the child and researches the circumstances surrounding the family, foster home and other factors to determine the best course of action through the court for the child. The CASA volunteer submits written reports to the court, with recommendations to the judge, and follows through with the child until all advocacy issues have been resolved.

Which children are assigned CASA volunteers?

Children who are victims of abuse and neglect who have become dependents of the court are assigned CASA volunteers when there are unresolved or significant issues surrounding the children's court case or life situation.

How does a CASA volunteer investigate a case?

The CASA volunteer meets regularly with (and gets to know) the child and gathers information about the child's current circumstances in the foster care system from the various people involved with the child's life, e.g. caretakers, family members, social workers, school officials, healthcare providers, and others who may have knowledge about the child. The CASA volunteer also reviews records pertaining to the child (court, school, medical, psychological, casework records), as well as other pertinent documents.

How does a CASA volunteer differ from a social worker?

State governments generally employ social workers. A social worker is required by law to be assigned to every child's case. They work on many cases at a time and, therefore, cannot always do intensive investigation about a particular child's circumstances. A CASA volunteer, on the other hand, has an opportunity to do a thorough investigation because s/he has only one or two cases at a time. The CASA volunteer provides valuable information that assists the social worker assigned to the case.

How much time is required in being a CASA volunteer?

CASAs work about 20-25 hours per month...sometimes more, sometimes less. Each case is different. Typical activities of a CASA volunteer include doing research, conducting interviews, preparing a CASA report to the Court for each Hearing, and attending all Hearings involving the child.

How long does a CASA volunteer remain involved with the case?

A CASA volunteer remains appointed to the child's case until the advocacy goals have been achieved or until the case is permanently resolved. One of the primary benefits of the CASA program is that the CASA volunteer is a consistent figure in the proceedings and provides continuity for the child.

Does the CASA volunteer act as a lawyer?

No. State laws require that each child have an attorney to represent him or her in court. The CASA volunteer provides valuable information that may assist the child's attorney in serving his/her client.

What is the benefit to the child of having a CASA?

A CASA volunteer offers a child someone to trust and feel safe with during complex, and sometimes frightening, legal proceedings. The CASA explains complicated court hearings to the child, supports them in court and explains all the various people involved in that child's case. A CASA volunteer also listens to the child's desires and makes them known to the court; however, the CASA will always make his/her recommendations to the court solely based on serving the child's best interests.

Does CASA of Los Angeles have the support of judges, lawyers, and social workers?

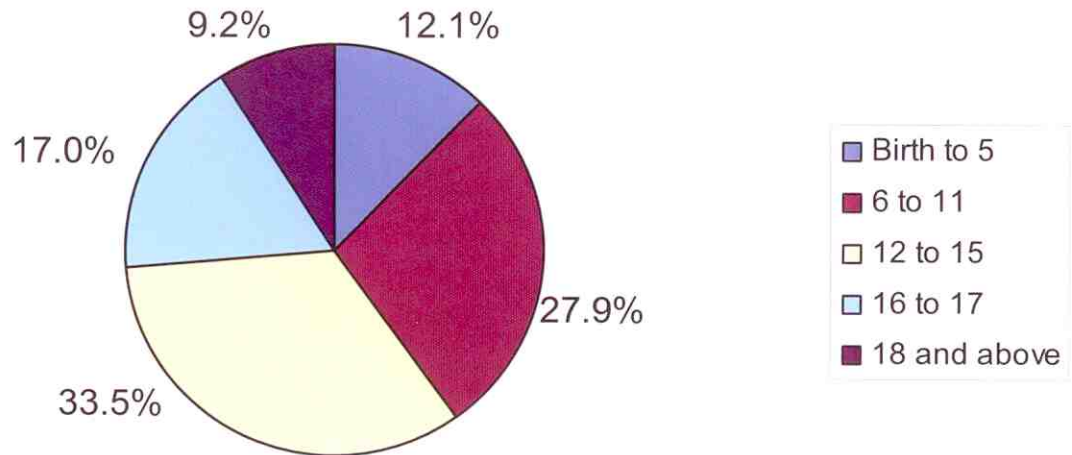
Yes. CASA of Los Angeles operates as a private-public partnership with the Superior Court. Dependency Court judges appoint CASA volunteers to specific cases. CASA is also endorsed by the American Bar Association, the National Bar Association, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention of the U.S. Dept. of Justice.

How can I find out more about CASA of Los Angeles?

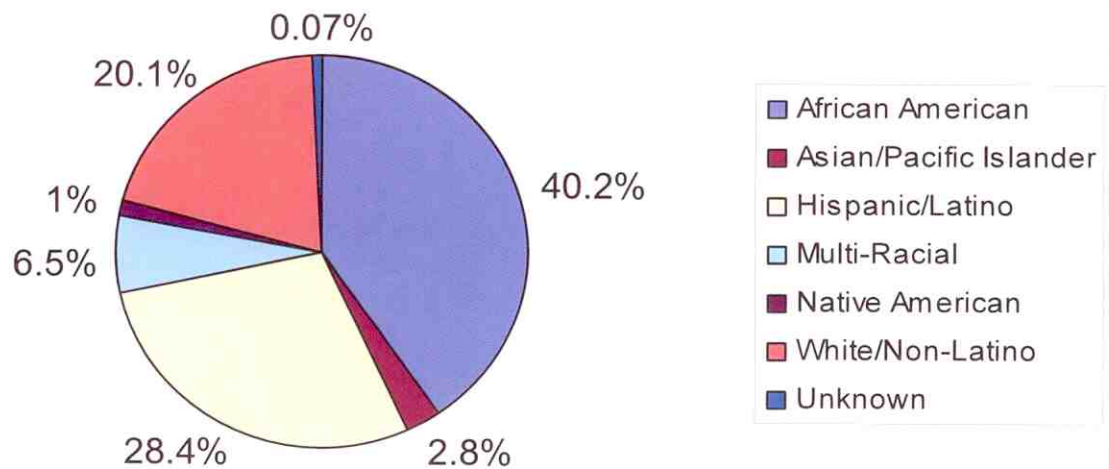
The easiest way is to visit www.casala.org or call (323) 526-6666.

CASA of Los Angeles serves

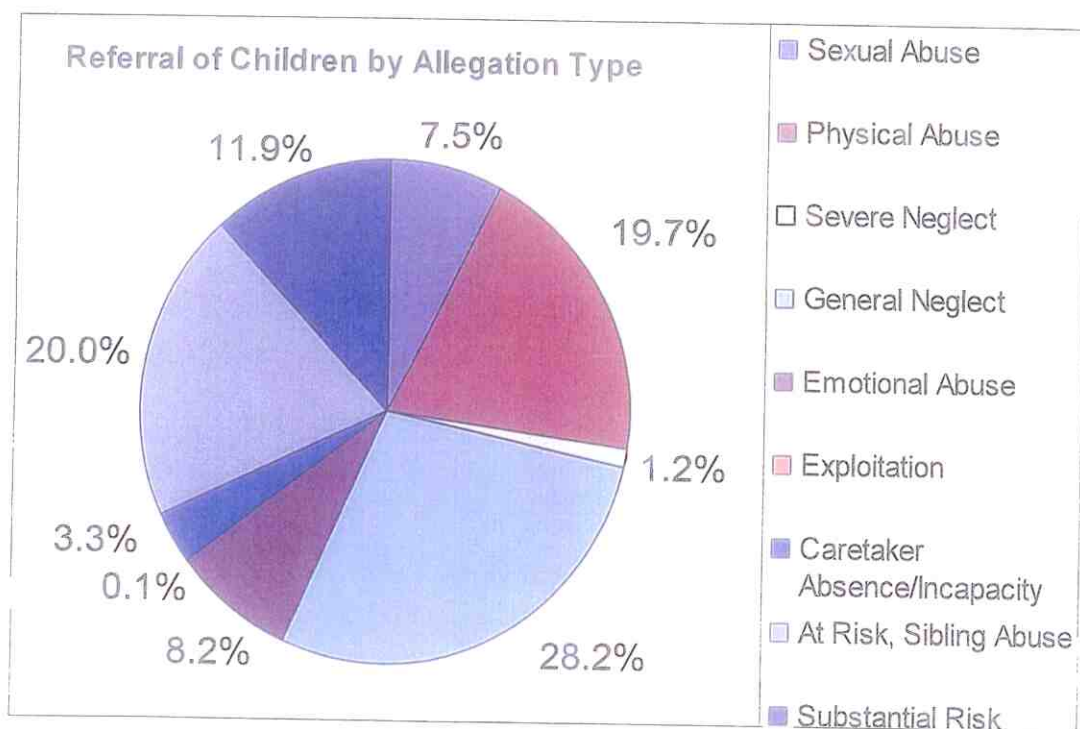
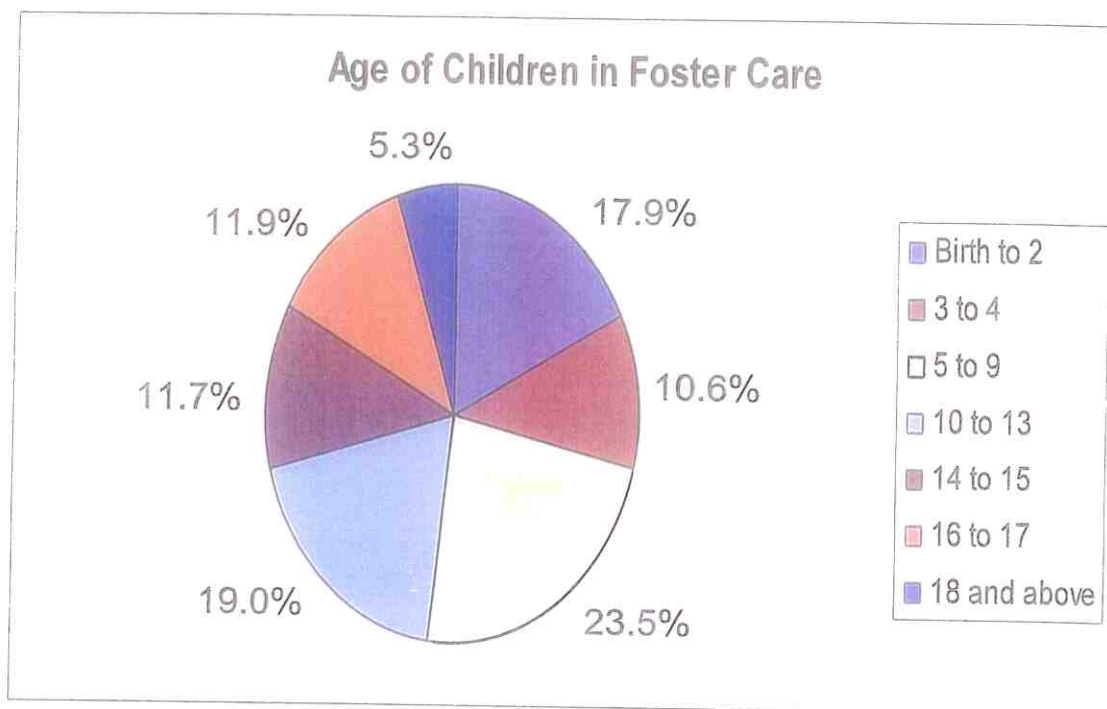
Age of Children Served



Race/Ethnicity of Children Served



In Los Angeles County



Information for fiscal year 2007-2008

DCFS Website http://www.lacdcfs.org/aboutus/fact_sheet/DRS/FY2007_2008_Fact_Sheet.htm

Daily News Los Angeles

HELPING HANDS

Organization becomes a nonprofit in wake of struggling economy.

By Erin Richards, Staff Writer

Posted: 07/12/2010 10:00:01 PM PDT



Renne Bilson is a Court Appointed Child Advocate who volunteers to do child advocacy for kids in the court system, Friday, July 9, 2010. (Michael Owen Baker/Staff Photographer)

After losing its funding from Los Angeles County because of the budget crisis, the Court Appointed Special Advocate program has reorganized as a nonprofit agency, with a new director and goals for expanding the number of foster children aided by its volunteers.

CASA provides a voice for individual foster children, many of whom are abused, neglected or abandoned and without any stable adult support.

"We help that child maneuver in a system that can be overwhelming for an adult," said Dilys Tosteson Garcia, the organization's new executive director. "The advocate can give these kids a leg up."

About 400 volunteers aid an estimated 600 foster kids, whose cases are heard in Children's Court in Lancaster or Monterey Park.

Garcia has plans to recruit more volunteers, with the goal of expanding CASA to help 1,000 children each year.

"Everyone contributes children to the system. Child abuse and neglect is everywhere," Garcia said. "We want to make sure that when children need an advocate they can get one they can relate to from their own community. Diversity is our goal, at every level."

CASA recently began working with the Child Care Resource Center in Chatsworth, in the hope of holding volunteer training sessions and making the program more accessible for San Fernando Valley residents.

Sherman Oaks resident Nina Stern, 61, began volunteering for CASA last fall and is working with two youngsters. She said she lives for the "breakthrough moment" when she can see the child she works with growing and benefiting from her influence.

In one of Stern's recent cases, a child was stymied by a school report on an artist. Stern took the youngster on a visit to the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena, and helped instill her own love of art.

"It was a fantastic moment for the child and for me because of the interest that we were able to share," Stern said.

Renne Bilson, 64, from Studio City, has been a CASA volunteer for 24 years and has helped 40 kids. She is currently working on three cases.

Although cases can last for years, Bilson's commitment to CASA and her kids has only strengthened.

One particularly important case to her concluded when she was able to find a permanent adoption for three siblings who had previously been deemed unadoptable. Bilson, however would not give up and continued to search, eventually finding a home for them.

"I just kept calling every week, my list of agencies, and one day I called and found a place for them," said Bilson. "That was amazing."

As one of only 56 volunteers from the Valley, Bilson sees expansion as vitally important to the kids in the system.

"There's definitely a need, and we help such a small percentage of the kids, we're very valuable for a child," she said. "Every child should have a CASA."

While CASA is always looking for volunteers, entry in the program is selective. Applicants must undergo an extensive training program, interviews and security clearance checks.

The program also requires 12 hours of continuing education annually, plus a two-year commitment of five hours a week.

Stern and Bilson credit the perseverance and longevity of the CASA volunteers with child cases as fundamentals for the program's success. They hope that recruiting a wider range of volunteers will allow more children to be helped.

"Because we are often the ones who know the case the most, we can suggest changes," Bilson said. "A small change will allow the kids to feel good about themselves and that can make all the difference."

"Tenacity is one of the most important qualities of a CASA. We don't give up."

Foster care loses safety net

L.A. County court cuts force out professional child advocates

SANDY BANKS

They were simply positions on a payroll list: six "supervisors" among 329 employees who lost their jobs in March during the first round of payroll cuts in the Los Angeles County Superior Court system.



But their jobs involved more than pushing paper or telling people what to do. They were professional children's advocates, counseling hundreds of volunteers assigned to some of the county's most vulnerable children.

Their termination ended more than 30 years of public funding for the Court Appointed Special Advocates program, known as CASA, an effort long considered a safety net — tiny and tightly stretched — for Los Angeles County's beleaguered foster care system.

The CASA supervisors helped volunteers harness the legal system and access community services — find eyeglasses for a foster child, arrange psychiatric treatment, alert a judge to a dangerous foster home or neglectful social worker.

It's a route to better communication and ultimately safer situations for foster children. Children like the baby who starved to death because doctors and police officers and social workers didn't share information.

Or 2-year old Viola Vancief, who died in a home that was run by an agency accused of hitting, choking and whipping other foster children.

Or 7-year-old Dae'von Bailey, who was killed by his mother's ex-boyfriend after telling anybody who would listen that the man had been abusing him.

CASA volunteers listen, ask questions, demand changes. Children with advocates spend less time in foster care, research shows, and have fewer disruptions in their lives.

The layoffs weren't a philosophical choice. The shrinking budget has already forced salary cuts, shuttered courtrooms and forced the court to shut down one day a month. "There's no more fat to cut," said union representative Milo Brown. "They have to cut meat now."

Very lean meat. There are enough CASA volunteers to serve only a tiny fraction of the more than 20,000 children in foster care in the county.

Last year, 569 children were assigned special advocates. This year, the cuts will reduce that number by 200.

The private fundraising group Friends of CASA is trying to pick up some of the slack, hiring one of the displaced supervisors and training volunteers to answer phones, screen cases and file court orders.

"That means four people trying to do the work of nine," said Bruce Heron, the nonprofit's interim director.

And it means hundreds of children waiting for a helper and a guide. Like

Eight years ago, in middle school, my daughter made friends with Trinity, a new classmate from a foster home, a comfortable Northridge condo with a couple she called Mom and Dad.

But, a year later they adopted a toddler and didn't have room for her anymore.

Trinity moved to a group home—her ninth placement in as many years. It was a few blocks outside our school's attendance zone, so she had to transfer midyear to a Chatsworth campus. She didn't fit in with the girls at her new school or her roommates in the new home.

She spent years bouncing among "placements" from the Antelope Valley to South Los Angeles. Our sleepovers and trips to Skateland stopped. We heard stories: She'd grown sullen, was skipping school, running off. Sometimes she was assigned a social worker, sometimes a probation officer.

Occasionally she'd call from a pay phone in the middle of the night. I'd pick her up and she'd stay with us for a few days. Sometimes the group home tracked me down, sometimes I talked her into going back. And sometimes I just left her at the Orange Line stop with car fare, a sack lunch and a \$20 phone card.

On Trinity's 16th birthday, my daughter and I headed down to her group home in Orange County with a cake and a gift: slippers and soft flannel pajamas.

But after an hour in rainy rush-hour traffic, we found out she had been transferred that morning to a locked facility because she threw a phone at a staffer during an argument.

I was warned that Trinity was dangerous; she needed professional help, not a hug from someone's well-meaning mom.

"She's unbalanced and very angry," her caseworker said, as if that were an odd response to a life of being unwanted.

Wouldn't you be angry if you had no family? Not a single person in your life



CASA
Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

CASA OF LOS ANGELES

201 Centre Plaza Drive,
Suite 3
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91754

www.casala.org

who would care for you, without being paid to do it?

A special advocate might have made a difference in Trinity's life — persuaded a judge to leave her at her old school, let her visit her brother in his foster home, kept track of her homecoming photos and old journals so they weren't tossed out when she changed homes.

"The social worker can't be there at all times," said Herron, a 12-year volunteer who just finished a two-year effort to get a teenage boy out of a group home and back home with his reformed father.

He'll have to reorganize the CASA program, making it more "volunteer-centric," he said. "The court has been generous in its support. But it's a failed model. We can't keep paying people to do this."

That means they need more volunteers: people willing to spend about an hour a week for the next two years helping one child.

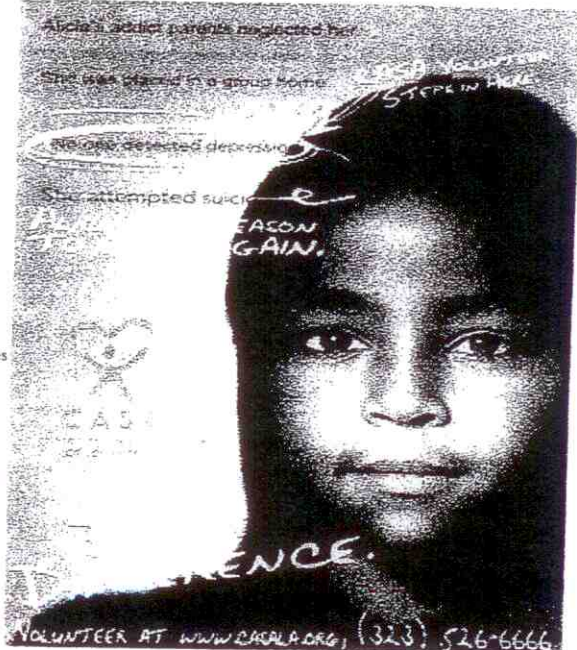
In the long run, he said, that might generate more community support and contributions. Maybe Clippers owner Donald Sterling's organization can put some money behind it, he said.

"This will be a very difficult year. But we will be successful."

And if the short-term cost is painful, at least there may be one long-term gain: more children who know that someone chooses to care for them. An advocate who isn't being paid.

For more information about CASA,
go to www.casala.org.

sandy.banks@latimes.com



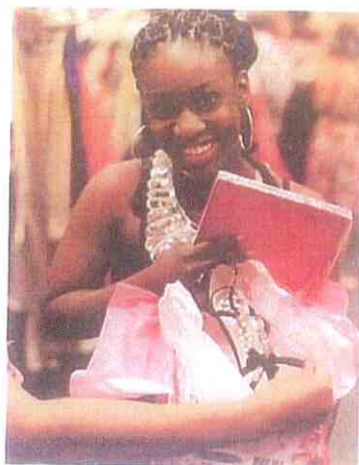
seventeen

<http://www.seventeen.com/fashion/blog/accessories/casala-glamour-gowns-prom-event>

casa/la gives foster children their dream prom!

By Seventeen Magazine

Now here's a story that will make you smile this [prom](#) season:



Recently, over 500 girls in the Los Angeles foster care system had the opportunity to attend [CASA/LA's](#) 10th Annual *Glamour Gowns* charity event, so that they could feel like a prom queen. At the event, the girls were able to pour through hundreds of [dresses](#), [shoes](#), purses and other [prom essentials](#), to create a look for a night they'll remember for the rest of their lives.

CASA/LA, a non-profit organization driven to improving the lives of foster children, organized over 200 volunteers to act as the young ladies' personal shoppers. If a girl's dream dress did not come in her size, alterations would be made by one of the volunteers, so they could have the perfect fit.

As an added bonus, [makeup](#) and [hairstyling](#) were all provided, so all of the young women could look and feel their best. Companies such as [Neutrogena](#), [Chinese Laundry](#), and [NYX Cosmetics](#) donated items from their best collections to make this event possible.

Want to be charitable too? Once you've experienced your ultimate prom, you can give another girl her own dream night through [DonateMyDress.org](#) — visit site for more details!



<http://www.seventeen.com/fashion/blog/accessories/casala-glamour-gowns-prom-event>

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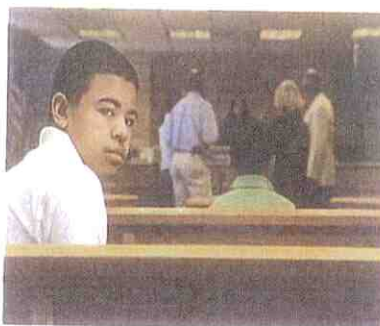
Funding Cut Off, CASA/LA Is Fending For Itself

By Mark Hrywna



The Court Appointed Special Advocates of Los Angeles (CASA/LA) might be the canary in a coal mine for the more than 1,000 CASA affiliates around the nation as it begins a new course as a self-sustaining nonprofit.

The Los Angeles Superior Court last March eliminated its financial support of CASA/LA. Though it had scaled back funding the past two years as a result of California's financial woes, CASA/LA relied on the courts for some \$1 million, or about half of its annual budget. CASA's fundraising arm, Friends of Children's Advocates, stepped in and took over operations, converting the L.A. affiliate into a full-fledged, self-sustaining nonprofit.



"In some ways, we're freer to have more aggressive goals," said Executive Director Dilys Tosteson Garcia, adding that the program struggled in the past to expand. Historically, CASA/LA has served 500 to 600 children each year, but Garcia has a goal of serving a least 1,000 annually with long-term advocacy.

CASA's 1,050 affiliates can be found in more than 40 percent of the nation's counties. The only state where it does not have a presence is North Dakota. The national CASA office has an annual budget about \$16 million, much of it funding that passes through to affiliates, said Michael Piraino, president of the national CASA. It derives much of its budget from contracts with the U.S. Department of Justice while private donations last year made up about 10 percent of funding. The "meat and potatoes" of CASA's work is recruiting and training volunteers to advocate on behalf of individual children in the foster care system, according to Garcia. It's labor intensive, with a huge need for staffing to support and prepare volunteers for court, she said.

"It's a very exciting moment for the organization, but it's a huge shift, in orientation, and how we run our business," she said. Going from a quasi-government bureaucracy to a more nimble, entrepreneurial organization that's more focused on effectiveness, efficiency and performance, and making sure donor dollars are put to optimal use, she said, will be a culture change.

After losing funding, CASA/LA laid-off staff, stopped taking new cases and redistributed existing cases among four employees. Volunteers continued to work with their children while the board put together a new strategic plan, hiring Garcia in July. The organization was running at half its regular budget and staff for about six months, she said, before starting to hire at the end of the summer, including a new director of development, John Charney. He previously ran his own consulting firm and for nearly 15 years was director of major and planned gifts at the American Red Cross of Greater Los Angeles.

Garcia estimates that about \$1.5 million in funding has been secured for this year's \$2-million budget.

While there hasn't been a rush to convert CASA affiliates into self-sustaining nonprofits, it's been talked about, said Piraino. A third of its programs are government-administered, he said, and many already have established nonprofit arms with the move to the nonprofit side led by the Los Angeles affiliate.

Los Angeles County's "cutbacks opened the door to step into something that could be very good for them. It's exciting to see how they're handling it," said Piraino. While there are other affiliates that have a structure that could follow CASA/LA, they haven't yet been pushed by a county's finances to convert totally to a nonprofit. "We'll probably see more of this over the next couple of years," he said.

"It's certainly something people are talking about. There are so many places where county and state budgets are so stretched. It's a consideration in a good number of places," said Piraino, adding that it also comes at a time when there's much talk about consolidating structures. "The conversations we're having are not so much how do we save money, avoid funding cutbacks,

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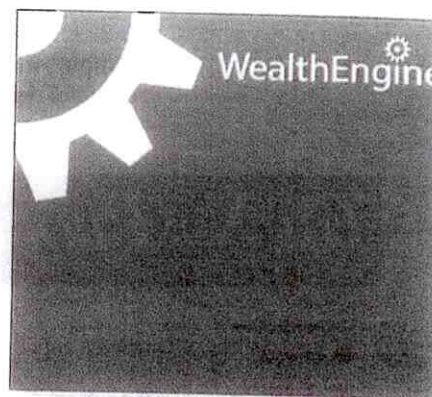
but how would we provide better advocacy services whatever the financial situation is. That's a strategic rather than reactive approach to that question," Piraino said. It might spark a conversation where perhaps there are multiple nonprofits in the same state or merge or share administrative costs across organizations.

"In our network, there's a really strong sense of local ownership for those programs, which is really important," he said. "We don't want to lose that by losing the structure that makes them look more remote in those places," said Piraino.

When CASA expands, it tends to go into smaller communities since it has a presence in most of the larger ones, and they're primarily suburban, with some rural locations, said Piraino. In recent years, new CASA affiliates have emerged in tribal court programs, he said, and among the largest metropolitan areas without a CASA program is Cleveland, where one an affiliate could be forming in the near future.

The fact that CASA/LA is moving to a nonprofit structure that "can be so responsive to a community, and decision-making looks close to a community that you're serving, is a smart thing to do."

"It could be interesting," Piraino said. "We'll see how it plays out in 10 years." NPT



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Deep Cuts Forces Foster Child Advocacy Group to Reinvent Itself

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While many organizations are anxiously waiting to find out how the governor's plan to tackle the deficit will impact their funding, a nonprofit organization dedicated to defending the interests of the most vulnerable children in Los Angeles County is taking matters into its own hands, and asking more people to pitch-in.

When CASA of Los Angeles (Court Appointed Special Advocates, or CASA/LA) lost all but its free office space last year, the group set about becoming a "100 percent self-supporting" agency and to double it's size and reach.

Founded in 1978, CASA/LA currently serves 500 children annually, a fraction of the more than 27,000 children in LA County who live in foster care or are emancipated due to abuse, neglect or abandonment.

Last March, CASA/LA lost all of it's state funding, a little more than half of their budget, according to Dilys Tosteson Garcia, the group's executive director. Although the cuts meant massive lay-offs, the organization fought to avoid reducing services to local children in the dependency court system that they serve.



Toys, books, stuffed animals and quilts fill CASA/LA's headquarters. (EGP photo by Gloria Angelina Castillo)

"Our goal this year is to raise \$2 million dollars to essentially replace all the costs that used to be covered by the court itself," said Garcia.

"Right now, CASAs get assigned to the most difficult cases because that's where the court needs the most help, but in an ideal world it would be great if any child that needed a CASA had one," she said.

Fourteen-year-old Carrie is one of the many children CASA has helped. She grew up in foster care, but her foster home provided such lax supervision that they didn't know where she was most of the time.

When she was 13, Carrie was sexually abused and violently raped by her "boyfriend." Her social worker didn't know what to do with her, so she placed her in a locked residential facility, where she was living until a CASA volunteer was assigned to her.

Carrie's CASA advisor helped her identify her strengths and potential and fought for her in court and helped reunite her with her biological brother. They are now living in the same foster home.

Then there's the case of David, now 14, who attempted suicide more than once and was diagnosed with depression and psychosis. His CASA volunteer advocate pushed to have him moved out of a psychiatric hospital to a specialized foster home, and helped organize visits between him and his brother. He is turning his life around, according to one of the many case studies provided to EGP.

Each of the cases assigned to CASA has its own particular story and needs. Many "CASA kids" have learning disabilities, physical disabilities, and severe emotional and mental problems, explains the organization. They are among the hardest to deal with and most in need of special services, yet they are the most likely to get lost or overlooked in the County's overwhelmed foster care system.

In some cases, CASA volunteers advocate for adoption by foster parents, or help secure a guardian for emancipated teenagers. They help children and their foster parents cope when the child is terminally ill. Because the program requires a three-year volunteer commitment, CASA volunteers become the one constant adult in a child's life who is fighting for them.

Garcia says the Department of Children and Family Services appoints social workers and attorneys to represent the child in foster care and his or her various family members. During a court hearing, medical professionals and therapeutic professionals may also be present. But the CASA volunteer—referred to simply as CASA or CASAs—provides detailed reports to the judge on the child's progress and makes sure that the system is working for the child.

"If the judge orders therapy, the CASA will go check, is that actually happening? And if it's not, they go report back to the judge and you know, someone will get in trouble, but eventually it will happen," Garcia explained to EGP. "So the CASA is there to make sure that the system works for the child." But with nearly 30,000 children in foster care in L.A. County, there are not enough CASA volunteers to meet the need.

Children in the court system face unemployment, homelessness, incarceration and suicide at higher rates as young adults. "The work that we do really does make a difference for these children. I mean, it gets them into safer environments, it gets them more access to resources, they make friends for life because often a volunteer will stay involved in a child's life for a very long time," Garcia said. "Once you connect two people, that becomes an opportunity for life long connection, it doesn't happen with every case but it happens a lot."

"Somebody walked a young man in here the other day who was just starting at UCLA. He had been with his CASA for 8 years. He had a very troubled, traumatized past, but somehow, out of that, he had managed to achieve. It's very remarkable, it's not that easy to get into UCLA," she said.

"But the bottom line is, no matter who the child is, our volunteer is trying to make the child's life better in whatever way they can identify." Every

situation is different said Garcia. While we are training people how to be successful advocates, at the end of the day, it's all about the human connection, about one person trying to help another, she said. "[It] really is the essence of what community is about."

CASA/LA began as a court sponsored and funded program but has always had a nonprofit component. That nonprofit has now taken over, and is working on a capital raising campaign to help them double the number of children they serve in the next five years, Garcia said.

Because CASA is headquartered at the Edmund D. Edelman Children's Court, they are especially interested in attracting nearby Monterey Park-area residents to serve as volunteers, she added.

John Charnay, a veteran fundraiser with more than 20 years of experience, was recently appointed as the organization's Director of Development and Communications.

The fundraising initiatives he is working on include growing donors at every level, creating partnerships with local organizations and applying for grants.

"We're looking to identify companies that might be supportive, foundations that might be supportive, individual philanthropists, and civic and social leaders, and we would love to hear from all of them," Charnay told EGP.

CASA/LA is also looking for a celebrity spokesperson, someone who has personal experience with the foster care system, to star in Public Service Announcements and recruit more volunteers, Charnay told EGP.

CASA/LA currently receives \$866,000 in Department of Justice federal funding, foundation grants and individual donations. "We are only going to be as big and as strong as the community is willing to fund," she said.

One of five original CASA Programs in the nation, CASA/LA is authorized and regulated by California law and standards established by the National CASA Association.

Children in the system come from every one of L.A.'s diverse communities and volunteers are needed from all walks of life, ethnic groups and who can speak one of the many languages spoken by kids in the system. For more information about CASA/LA, to donate or become a volunteer, visit <http://www.casala.org/home.php>

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The Malibu Times

NEWS

'Rudy' star revisits the football field for CASA of L.A.

Print Page

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Led by Malibu resident Dilys Tosteson Garcia, the nonprofit CASA, which provides foster youth services, has attracted support from celebrities such as Sean Astin. The 10th annual Glamour Gowns event, which provides a night of dress up and enchantment for foster girls, takes place Saturday.

By Michael Aushenker / Special
to The Malibu Times

During last weekend, "Rudy" returned to the football field, and this time, he played in Malibu.



CASA/LA Executive Director, Dilys Tosteson Garcia with "Lord of the Rings" star and event host, Sean Astin Saturday at Pepperdine University.

It wasn't American football, but at last Saturday's fundraiser for CASA of Los Angeles, Sean Astin, star of the 1993 underdog-athlete movie "Rudy," played in a celebrity soccer game at Pepperdine University's Alumni Park. The weather held up beautifully for "Kicks for Casa," a Kappa Alpha Theta sorority-hosted event, where about 500 people cheered on Astin, best known for his work in "The Goonies" and, of course, for his role Samwise Gamgee in the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy.

An eclectic roster of celebrities joined Astin for the fundraiser included Christopher Atkins ("The Blue Lagoon"), Melissa Biggs ("Baywatch"), Kiko Ellsworth ("Dexter"), Melissa Hunter ("Entourage") and Richard Steinmetz ("Heroes").

The event supported CASA/LA (Court Appointed Special Advocate), a nonprofit organization that serves foster children.

In addition to last Saturday's Kappa Alpha Theta event, the 10th annual Glamour Gowns, a private event empowering young foster girls, takes place on April 16 at the Los Angeles Convention Center. Overseeing the proceedings is a longtime Malibu resident Dilys Tosteson Garcia, executive director of CASA/LA.

Garcia is still glowing over the "Kicks" event ("Awesome!"), which proceeds are earmarked to CASA of Los Angeles and National CASA, specifically toward subsidizing public awareness efforts.

CASA's main office is based in the Edmund D. Edelman Children's Court in Monterey Park, with a satellite office in Lancaster that serves the Antelope Valley at the Alfred J. McCourtney Juvenile Justice Center. Los Angeles County has the largest foster care

population in the country (25,000 children), so CASA is always recruiting and training people to advocate on behalf of foster kids.

With the soccer match event behind them, CASA will now focus on this Saturday's "Glamour Gowns" event.

"Glamour Gowns is one of our signature events," Garcia said. "We basically create a store in what is essentially a raw space. Foster girls come from all over the Los Angeles County system and they get a head-to-toe dressing experience ... a new dress, new shoes, jewelry, accessories. They'll be completely made to be beautiful. Last year, we clothed almost 400 girls.

"These are kids who got the short end of the stick. It's a terrific self-esteem builder."

With her partner, Lola Jackson, Garcia enjoys life in the Corral Canyon part of Malibu, where she has lived since 1983. Nearby, the couple enjoys "eating at Malibu Seafood and walking on Westward Beach and stop in at the Sunset.

"I'm a beach girl with a heart," Garcia said. "I grew up originally in Puerto Rico, went to school at Stanford, and I came down to L.A. because it was warmer."

June will mark the one-year anniversary of Garcia's employment at the nonprofit. She brought to CASA her extensive experience in advertising, marketing, and consulting clients who work with at-risk children, and she said she couldn't be happier.

"It's been an amazing year," she said. "It is a very unique organization. We empower community citizens to come in and help these foster kids ... and help them get beyond the trauma they've experienced."

CASA is a nonprofit arm of a defunct state program that has been spun off into a nonprofit organization. Last year, CASA raised \$1 million annually to serve 8,000 Los Angeles County children "and we'll now strive to break \$2 million a year," Garcia said.

About 7,000 children have enjoyed one-time advocacy services, and for about 600 children a year, "we provide an individual long-term advocate for two or three years," Garcia said. "A volunteer makes a pretty big commitment when they decide to do this work."

Some Malibu-area CASA volunteer child advocates include Jan Brice, Nancy Jo Paul, Edina Somlai and Joan MacLaughlin. These longtime volunteers, Garcia said, "work with these children until outstanding issues are deemed resolved by the judge. We also have many generous donors from Malibu, whom we thank for their ongoing support."

"I have been involved in CASA's mission for three eventful years," said Somlai, a foreign national from Hungary. "I moved to beautiful Malibu with my husband a couple of years ago.

"Soon after I finished my training I got my first case," she continued. "I find the experience truly life changing. Neglected and abused teens need someone to speak up for them. That became so clear when I first saw a youngster in a courtroom holding onto nothing else but a court-provided teddy bear. These teens go through so much during their formative years. It is a great feeling to be there, advocating for them."

Brice said, "Having the opportunity, not only to investigate the circumstances of a child in foster care, but also to be able to make recommendations to a judge in Dependency Court that may be life changing for that child means that we really are 'a powerful voice in child's life,' just like the CASA motto says."

In the 25 years that Brice has been a CASA volunteer, "my most memorable case was finding a wonderful adoptive home for a 9-year-old African American boy, who had been in foster care since birth," she said. "When he was seven years old and ran away from his foster home, the judge assigned me to be his CASA advocate."

Paul has been a court-appointed special advocate since 1995.

"For my first 12 years or so as a CASA, I took on very challenging cases," Paul said. "My children ranged from ages four to 17. Most of my children were in foster care or group homes. Each situation presented its own set of difficulties."

During the past three years, Paul has worked at the E. Edelman Children's Court in Monterey Park.

"Some of the parents of these children were working very hard to retain custody of their child," she said. "Others were no longer in the child's life. As one would expect, happy endings were few and far between ... CASA's responsibilities are endless and no two cases are alike."

"By creating human relationships," Somlai said, "we are not only becoming a team to face their challenges together, but these bonds are all so critical to each of our teens' future development and success."

"Becoming a CASA [volunteer] enriched my life in so many ways," Somlai continued. "I found not only purpose but thousands of like-minded friends, too."

Ultimately, what's good for this organization will be good for L.A.'s foster youth.

"We not only are trying to keep the program operating but also trying to make sure that the organization is healthy and ready to grow," Garcia said.

CASA is an entity in a transitional phase, but Garcia prefers to express it another way: "I like to use the word 'transformational.'"

More information on CASA, including how to volunteer, can be obtained online at www.casala.org.

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THE CASA QUARTERLY

COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES
FOR CHILDREN
CASA OF LOS ANGELES
WINTER 2011



Snapshots of the Past, A Look into the Future

Our First Year Together!

By Dilys Tosteson Garcia,
Executive Director

Dear CASA Volunteers,

When I joined CASA at the beginning of our fiscal year last June, the Board charged me with implementing the organization's strategic plan to create a thriving entrepreneurial non-profit CASA culture capable of expanding its program to meet the needs of twice as many foster children as

this program has historically served within 3 years. I'd like to share with you some highlights from our first 6 months together to stimulate a deep community-wide conversation on our progress so far and what we need together to accomplish moving forward.

My first weeks were spent meeting and listening to board, staff, volunteers, donors, courts and other community partners. I got an earful on people's dreams

and aspirations for this program that provides such unique service to vulnerable children.

Children like Jan's terminally ill child, Judy's adopted autistic 3-year old, Renne's successfully-placed 4-sibling set after 12 years with her as a CASA, Nina's little guy in a psychiatric facility, Marcia now Roger's young man with Asperger's who has no family connection of any kind. The heart-wrenching stories I

(Continued on page 12)

Glamour Gowns 2011

Saturday, April 16, 2011

Los Angeles Convention Center

Free prom dresses, shoes, and accessories for any high school aged girl currently in the Los Angeles foster care system in need of a formal gown for a special event.

Glamour Gowns, currently in its tenth year, is sponsored by CASA/LA, but would not be possible without the community participation of **Chinese Laundry**, which has donated new shoes and bags, **Masquerade** (who will be

supplying dresses) and the women of **Share, Inc.** (who are underwriting many of the costs.)

If you would like to volunteer for Glamour Gowns, please contact **Chantel Paniagua** via e-mail at: cpaniagua@casala.org.

Girls wishing to participate in the event must **RSVP in advance by calling Joanne at 310 471-1239 or to marshall.sue59@gmail.com by April 12, 2011.** Girls must give their name and the name of their CSW. Reservations will not be accepted after April 12.



'Tis the Season.....

Every year during the winter holidays CASA likes to show our appreciation to the CASA Volunteers by putting on a holiday party. The party was held at the Children's Bureau in Downtown Los Angeles, very fitting for such an occasion.

There was a lovely food spread, beverages, and yummy desserts provided. More importantly CASAs were able to mingle and choose toys, quilts accompanied with books, and gift cards to give to their CASA kids.

The room was filled with warm spirits and we look forward to celebrating again this winter season.



CASA Christine Beilinson

Volunteer Support Team/
AmeriCorps Member An Le



CASAs
Mary & Chris Christophersen



Guest Lola Jackson,
Board Member Cathleen Cobb &
CASA Staff Dilys Garcia

CASA Eileen Sheiniuk & CASA Staff
Carolyn McGee



CASA Peter Petzold



Board Members
Sue Marshall & Joanne Solov



CASA Staff Sarita Carden,
CASA Jean Youngquist,
CASA Staff John Charnay &
CASA Dan Silva



CASA Jan Brice &
Board Member Pat Trendacosta



CASA Staff Lauri Halderman & CASA
Heidi Ashcraft



Board Member
Steve Bloom, Esq.



Little Jaron, Jasmin, & CASA
Virginia Richie

To Be a CASA!!!



CASAs Tom & Betty Freitag

CASAs Marcia Strauss & Judy Zaidner

CASAs Ann & Charles Pratt

The CASAs in AV celebrated at the Black Angus restaurant with the department 426 (the dependency court where AV is located). This was a great celebratory collaboration seeing as though the court and AV have a very close relationship.

CASAs were able to pick up goodies and gift cards as well for their CASA kids. As one can tell from the photos everyone had a great time and AV is also looking forward to this year's winter celebration.



Volunteer Support Team/ AmeriCorps Member Danica Sherman & CASA Staff Melinda Murphy

CASA Barbara Bruner

CASAs Trudy Armer & Rita Giamaniaro



CASAs Carol Marlowe & Catherine McMahon

CASA Linda Galati & CASA Abbe Hofstein

CASA Staff Louise Bieschke & CASA Carol Easton



Volunteer Support Team/ AmeriCorps Member Kelli Rasmus & CASA Staff Chantel Paniagua

CASA Jim Anderson

Thank you USC Thetas for the Lovely Centerpieces!

What's Up with AmeriCorps?

By An Le, AmeriCorps Service Member, Volunteer Support Associate



Since the beginning of our service in October of 2010, we have met many CASAs coming through the office wondering who we are and what we do here at CASA/LA. As Volunteer Support Associates, our role is to generate and recruit volunteers, provide support for current CASAs, represent CASA/LA at community events and more. From October 2010 to January 2011, under the supervision of Chantel, Kelli, Danica and I have reached out to over 700 potential volunteers and recruited over 40 for Pre-Service Training. We have also helped organize 5 orientations, 4 in-services and the 2011 Winter Pre-Service Trainings at both Monterey Park and Antelope Valley offices. Our goals and expectations serving as AmeriCorps members have continually been met throughout the past few months, and we hope to reach out to more potential CASA volunteers throughout the remainder of our term of service.

Not only are we serving to help CASA/LA meet the needs of hundreds of children in the Los Angeles dependency system, but we are also part of a wider community of AmeriCorps members throughout the United States, united by four common goals:

1. *Getting Things Done* through direct and demonstrable service that helps

solve community problems in the areas of education, public safety, environment and other human needs.

2. *Strengthening Communities* by bringing together Americans of all ages and backgrounds in the common effort to improve our communities.

3. *Encouraging Responsibility* by enabling members to explore and exercise their responsibilities towards their communities, families and themselves.

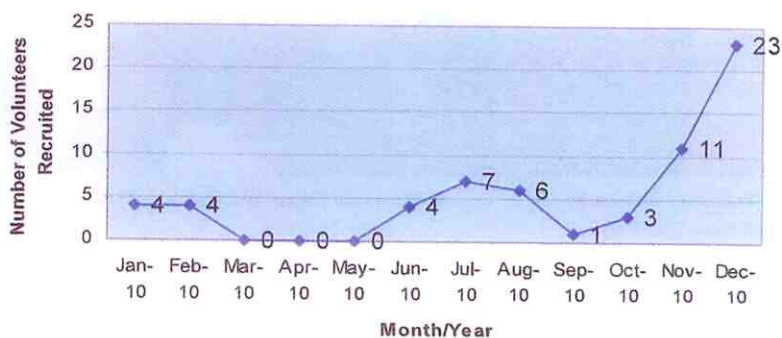
4. *Expanding Opportunity* by enhancing members' educational opportunities, job experience and life skills.

As members of the Prevent Child Abuse California (PCA CA) AmeriCorps Programs, we are serving as part of a state-wide effort, along with other members throughout California, to enhance child abuse prevention

efforts. CASA volunteers are vital to this goal, and by outreaching and recruiting for more CASA volunteers, we are serving towards creating greater awareness while strengthening our communities through civic engagement.

As a CASA, you can also help support our efforts! By reaching out and speaking to your friends, families and co-workers about CASA/LA, you are contributing to a larger state-wide effort to strengthen communities and prevent child abuse and neglect. If you are involved in any service clubs, groups, churches or any other networks, we would love to come out to the community and speak about CASA/LA! Please feel free to contact An Le regarding any community outreach and speaking opportunities at ale@casala.org.

Volunteers Recruited from Jan. 2010-Dec. 2010



In Memory of Beloved CASA Jo Martinez



We grieve the loss of beloved CASA Josephine "Jo" Martinez who passed away in January.

Those who knew Jo knew that underlying her quiet, gentle demeanor was a thoughtful, objective, and strong advocate for children in the

foster care system. When asked what being a CASA volunteer meant to her, Jo replied:

"Being a CASA has humbled me. I have learned to be more patient, more realistic, and more compassionate. It's made me a better person."

Jo joined CASA in 1994, following her retirement from the City of Montebello. During her 16 years as an advocate she served 14 children. She realized her bilingual

skills were critical to the successful outcomes she experienced on her cases, and she strived to recruit more bilingual CASA volunteers. In recognition of her dedication and work, Jo was selected CASA of Los Angeles Volunteer of the Year in 2004, and in 2005 the National CASA Association honored Jo Martinez as the G.F. Bettineski Child Advocate of the Year. When Jo learned she had been selected as the National CASA Volunteer of the Year, Jo wrote: "It never dawned on me that I would receive an award for a commitment that has given a new dimension to my life."

Jo's sensitivity towards the needs of a child can be illustrated by the story of one of these children; a child we will refer to as "Evie." Evie witnessed the murder of her little sister and the case drew considerable attention from the media. Jo played a pivotal role

as Evie's CASA by ensuring that the child was protected from exposure to media coverage and that Evie received the care and help she needed to heal her emotional wounds. The Court agreed with Jo's recommendation and placed Evie with an aunt in a distant county. Yet, Jo never faltered in her commitment to Evie, traveling hundreds of miles over the course of three years to monitor the child's progress. On Jo's final visit with Evie, the child's therapist and Jo took Evie to the beach where the little girl tied to a balloon a letter she had written to her deceased sister and released it over the ocean.

Our heartfelt condolences go out to Jo Martinez's husband Mike and their three children. Jo will be deeply missed, but not forgotten. Thank you, Jo, for being a part of the CASA family.

CASA Coordinators

Thanks to the dedication and enthusiasm of CASA Coordinators **Linda Galati, Maithe Harispe, Peggy Huber, Carol Marlowe, Jan Miller, Elizabeth Moore, Ron Oest, Sandra Solis, Judith Sweet, Alison Wilcox, and Harriet Zaretsky**, the CASA Coordinator (CC) Pilot Project has proven extremely successful. Based on this success we are now ready to move into Phase 2, a more definitive long-term implementation along the lines of the successful Peer Coordinator model used by CASA of Maricopa County in Arizona. In this next phase, CASA/LA will be recruiting, screening, and training more CCs who will be assigned between three to five new CASA volunteers and will remain connected to those volunteers through their tenure as a CC.

Why adopt this model? There are 25,000 foster children in Los Angeles County and no one knows better than you the dire circumstances of these children suffering the effects of abandonment, abuse, and neglect. We all want CASA to help more children in the system. In order to compete as a newly self-supporting non-profit for contributions CASA/LA must demonstrate the effectiveness of its work with children and show high performance with donor dollars. Expanding our capacity to serve more children is critical to our success as a non-profit in the very competitive child welfare arena. Volunteer peer support of volunteer teams expands the number of children any one staff person supports and dramatically increases the cost effectiveness of our services.

Currently, one staff supports 45 volunteers serving an average of two children per year, each with a potential total of 90 children served per staff member. A fully developed CASA Coordinator structure would allow for one staff to support many as 15 CCs who would each support up to five volunteers (each with up to two children), serving as many as 150 children per program staff member. That's building our capacity!

Soon CASA/LA will increase our capacity by recruiting, screening, and training additional CCs for this expanded role in both the AV and MP offices. Look for more details to be rolled-out soon, but the goal is to have a new group of CCs trained and matched-up with volunteers by the end of the fiscal year!



Our Gratitude to You

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LAPA Gala Event

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High Desert Medical Group

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RV Club

St. Benedict Catholic Church

The South Bay Quilter's Guild

USC Kappa Alpha Theta Sorority Inc.

Children's Court Assistants

-By Kelli Rasmus, Volunteer Support Team

Our Children's Court Assistants focus on creating a wonderful environment for newly detained children and children who may be familiar with hearings, but may still need guidance. CCA's are with the children throughout their day in court, especially when a child is emotionally distraught or confused after a hearing. Shelter Care, where the children wait for their hearings, values the CCA's and their role in the children's hearing process.



Jan Brice, who creates the schedules and collects the hours for the CCA's, does her best to accommodate the CCA's and assure that they have all the materials they need prior to their Shelter Care shifts. She's an absolute gem.

CASA is grateful to have such dedicated volunteers who thrive to be a positive difference in a child's life.

CASA's Sweetheart

-By Chantel Paniagua, CASA Staff



On February 14th, CASAs & CASA Staff joined for our CASA Sweetheart recognition of Carol Marlowe. Her many contributions, especially her critical role in volunteer management during these past 2 years of transition, has been quite admirable. Such dedication from volunteers makes our program flourish as we transform into a community-supported, exclusively non-profit organization. Carol continues to be key as a CASA Coordinator, pioneering peer support for new volunteers and extending our capacity to serve more children with volunteers in new roles. There were so many goodies, smiles and laughs shared in our conference room that day. Although we celebrated Carol's contributions we also celebrated all of our CASAs during Valentine's Day because they too are CASA's Sweethearts.

The people listed to the right assisted in making the 2011 CASA Graduates have the best training experience possible. Their time and expertise are greatly appreciated and we value them tremendously.

CASAs

Christine Beilinson
Renne Bilson
Barbara Bruner
Peggy Byrnes
Cathleen Cobb
Sam Herod
Peggy Huber
Jan Miller
Elizabeth Moore
Marsha Parkhill
Marty Spear
Phil Stein
Judith Sweet

Outside Presenters

Katie Brown and
Shantel Vachani, Public Counsel

Mary Nichols
Department of Children and Family Services

Dr. Gia Crecilius and
Jane Tesoro
Department of Mental Health

Mary Rhoades
Los Angeles Superior Court

Judicial Officers

Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court
Michael Nash
Judge Rudolfo Diaz
Commissioner Stanley Genser
Commissioner Jacqueline Lewis
Commissioner Debra Losnick
Commissioner Marilyn Martinez
Judge Amy Pellman
Referee Sherri Sobel
Commissioner Anthony Trendacosta

Never Too Late to Have a CASA

-By Melinda Murphy, Program Manager

CASA/LA would like to thank Nick for sharing his story during the 2011 January Pre-Service Training. Nick spent four years in foster care, replete with multiple placements, before aging out of the system. While in foster care, Nick played football in high school and was elected Team Captain. Football has always been a passion of Nick's as he remembers as a little boy his beloved mother cheering him on at games. Nick's mother unfortunately lost her battle to breast cancer at a young age and there was no relative able to provide a safe and stable home for him. The 6'4" athlete is now attending community college and playing football for his college team. His CASA, Erica Price, was appointed to Nick's case when he was 18 years-old. She toured college campuses with him and helped Nick apply for financial aid. CASA also assisted Nick in finding housing. Nick credits CASA for getting the services he needed and helping to improve his life.



Welcome to CASA of Los Angeles!

Introducing John Charnay, Director of Development



John has over 20 years of experience as a major fundraiser and has generated more than \$150 million for leading charities in greater Los Angeles. For nearly fifteen years he served as Director of Major and Planned Gifts in the Financial Development Department of the American Red Cross of Greater Los Angeles---the second largest chapter of the nation's number two charity. Prior to that, he was Director of Capital Campaign Development with the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, where he served as Director of Marketing and Public Relations. He attended the Wharton School of Finance and Commerce, the University of Pennsylvania, Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism and Southwestern University School of Law.

Introducing Yael Gittleman, Development Coordinator

Yael Gittleman is from the Bay Area, where prior to college, she studied music. She attended Cal State Long Beach on a scholarship for vocal performance, but realized a profession in either teaching or performing was not an ideal career for her. Yael always had a passion for Special Events; she then switched her major to Recreation Leisure Studies which enabled her to follow that career path. She previously worked for an event production company in the entertainment technology industry, but didn't enjoy the corporate, for-profit world. While searching for positions with non-profits, she fell into the position here at CASA, which was right up her alley. Yael is excited about the organization's mission, and about what she can bring to the table in order to help CASA grow.



Introducing Ken Sok, Intern Monterey Park



"It is on the level of human awareness that virtually all solutions to the great problems must now lie." -C. Wright Mills. This awareness is what brings Kenneth Sok to CASA of LA. Kenneth is currently at CASA as an intern, handling Revenues and Accounting work, as well as, participating in expediting of processes in Donations and Fundraising. He is a senior at California State University of Los Angeles majoring in Sociology with the option of Law and Society. His experience includes a volunteer internship for the Edmund D. Edelman Children's Court through the Superior Court Outreach Program, fundraising for the Office of Annual Giving at Cal State LA. While Kenneth aims to help CASA in generating and accounting funds, his key goal is to ensure that the children's voices get heard.

Introducing Mia Gorman Stamps, New Board Fellow

Mia Gorman Stamps focuses on outreach, development and relationship building with professional advisors and donors in addition to supporting the California Community Foundation's (CCF) planned giving capacities. Before joining CCF in September 2009, Stamps was in the financial services industry for more than 15 years with Bank of America, Wells Fargo and most recently Allstate Insurance Company. She has licenses in Property and Casualty, Life and Health and earned a Series 63 license and certification in Uniform Securities Agent State Law from the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority. She is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in mass communications and business marketing from Loyola Marymount University. Mia is an active member of Step Up's Women's Network and Junior League of Los Angeles.



Congratulations to the 2011 CASA Graduates!!



| | | |
|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Lee Alessandra | Katherine Hill | Hilarie Ormsby |
| Judy Alves | Gail Krieger | Hethie Parmesano |
| Elena Avila | Lori Kupfer | Allison Purtell |
| Anita Aratow | Maureen Lucas | Ellen Rand |
| Emma Barrientos | Janet Licht | Alisa Scrafield |
| Pamela Bingham | Birdie Martin | Victoria Thompson |
| Corinne Bennett | Anissa McNeil | Kimberly Turner |
| Claire Coleman | Venezia Mojarro | Dick Ur |
| Eileen Gates | Hitochi Morimoto | Wayne Welde |
| Judy Gish | Natalia Olarte | Nancy Wright |

A Climb for CASA

By Laura Saade, CASA

On September 27, 2010, I climbed Mt. Whitney for CASA and Shanquil. I have worked with Shanquil for 8 years, and have seen him grow from a 9-year-old boy to an almost 17-year-old young man. Many friends supported me in the climb, with both moral support and financial contributions to CASA. Combined, we raised more than \$2000 for the wonderful work that our CASAs and supervisors do, and for all of our beautiful CASA kids. Throughout the climb-all 19 hours of it! – there were many times I wondered just how I was going to make it to the top. The peak is 14,497 feet up – the highest in the contiguous United States. During that time, I thought about Shanquil and other CASA kids, as well as my supportive friends, and tried to channel just a bit of the perseverance that our CASA kids need every day. If you plan to run a race, climb a mountain, swim a channel, do it for CASA! Spreading the word is easy through email, and friends are anxious to support such a great cause, especially when they know how important it is to you.



AV CASA Has A New Office!

"Before"

As many of you may have heard, the Antelope Valley CASA office has been planning to move down the hall into a bigger office. We are excited to announce that we've finally done it! The Antelope Valley office recently set up shop in our new home, Room 1153. Now that we are in a bigger office, we plan to expand our program to serve more children and recruit more volunteers. Below are pictures recapping the progress of our move. Look across the page to see how we're doing in our new office. Please feel free to stop by, say hello, and check out our new space whenever you get a chance!



*In the midst of setting up our new space.
We are excited to have windows in our new office!*



*Wow! Our office supplies seemed to multiply
during the move down the hall*

Many, many thanks to all the volunteers
who helped us make the Big Move!!!

We couldn't have done it without you!



*Putting a special touch
on the room!*

Dave Youngquist
Will Galati
Toska Garner
Virginia Richie
Little Jaron
Rosa Carreon
Chardelle Torres
Michael Torres



*CASAs Toska Garner and Virginia Richie
help make our new office beautiful*



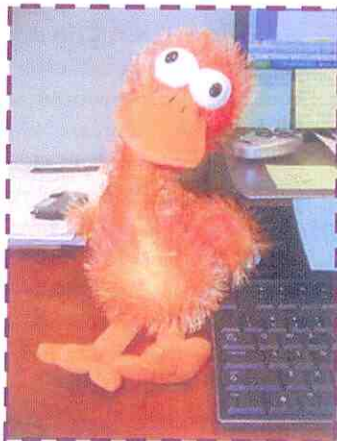
CASA Judy Zaidner
reviews a case

"After"

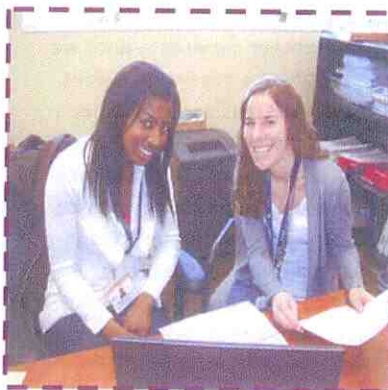


CASA Ron Oest checks out a
book in our library

Please Note Our New Contact Information
CASA of Los Angeles—Antelope Valley Office
Alfred McCourtney Juvenile Justice Center
1040 West Avenue J, **Room 1153**
Lancaster, CA 93534
Phone: 661-723-CASA (2272)
Fax: 661-723-2219



The CASA-AV office mascot,
KooKoo McMurman!



Jasmine McClendon and Danica Sherman
get ready for the AV volunteer training



Melinda Murphy and CASA Sandy
Price work hard on a case

Dilys' Desk



(Continued from page 1).

heard about our volunteers' children fueled our progress.

We began moving with a focus on program and volunteer services staffing. Already in place were a strong Program Director in Sarita and core Program Managers Carolyn, Lauri & Melinda. Program growth would focus on adding Program Supervisors like then newly-arrived Louise. We brought on board two additional program supervisors (Rebekah in AV, Dana in MP), 2 new program assistants (Jasmine & Angela) a volunteer services director (Jaren) with expansion experience, 3 AmeriCorps volunteers (An, Danica & Kelli). At every opportunity we hired up to improve overall quality and performance. We promoted high-performing AmeriCorps volunteer Chantel to a regular staff position of Volunteer Recruitment & Training Associate. Then we shifted our gaze to development and administrative staffing needs. We eliminated an

Executive Assistant position and restructured to fund a much-needed Business Manager (Mely). In order to further contain costs and improve controls we've begun bringing bookkeeping and administrative functions that had been outsourced when the court program closed, back in-house. In Development, we hired a highly skilled donor database-managing Development Coordinator (Yael) to in turn support our hire of a seasoned Development Director (John) who was able to immediately jump in and widen our fundraising pipeline by almost \$1MM within his first 45 days. He was able to build on the results of board member Roger who single handedly grew our initial donation pipeline to \$1.5MM while we searched for John. Collaborative volunteer/staff efforts like this are the hallmark of our successful transition. Volunteers stepping up, Roger in development, Bruce in management, Ralph in finance, Carol Marlowe in volunteer services – until we were able to get key positions filled and stabilized for higher performance needed ahead. Our accomplishments have been remarkable in this area thanks to all of you who step up to take cases, answer phones, offer in-service and other training services, share ideas and connect us with potential donors. Everywhere I look the CASA community steps up.

Our highly trained and dedicated volunteer child advocates continue to work directly with their court-appointed special children, advocating on their behalf and in their best interest. Court assistants continue staffing Shelter Care on a daily basis, offering orientations, guidance and comfort to thousands of otherwise unaccompanied children at court for their first hearing or some follow-up proceeding. Other volunteers offer office support, participate in preparation for events such as Glamour Gowns and serve on a variety of committees. We resumed training new Volunteer advocates with classes of 20 in September and another 30 in January; aggressively stepping up outside recruitment thanks to efforts led by Jaren in Volunteer Services.

We are again more proactively going out into the community promoting connection with CASA.

The new CASA Coordinator function that began as a twinkle in our eye is being piloted, with 11 dedicated volunteers helping us pioneer this effort to expand our capacity through peer support team leaders like Linda Galati, Maithe Harispe, Peggy Huber, Harriet Zaretsky, Peggy Huber, Carol Marlowe, Jan Miller, Elizabeth Moore, Ron Oest, Sandra Solis, Judith Sweet & Alison Wilcox. Together we

(Continued on page 13)



(Continued from page 12)

are forging a path and learning how this new position can support our expansion efforts.

Everywhere we could we implemented cost containment and will continue to do so. During the transition we continued County standards such as 100% health benefits coverage for staff and full volunteer mileage reimbursement. We cannot afford these expense levels as a private non-profit and we are taking measures to contain expenditures that require sacrifice from us all. In September CASA's employer contribution to employee health benefits was capped for the first time ever in line with other non-profit CASA programs at \$300/month/employee and we fixed and brought previously uncontrolled costs down by \$34,000. As I've discussed with many of you at our Progress Conversations recently, our next step in this area is the phase out of volunteer mileage reimbursement by April 1. We appreciate your support in this and staff will work with you to provide help for extraordinary travel expenses and extenuating circumstances on a case by case basis using Dillon's Special Needs Fund.

This year the board increased its annual give of \$2500 by 40% to \$3500 and is discussing taking this increase to 50% for the next fiscal year. Volunteers in new training classes were asked to begin donating as a CASA on the very day they were sworn in. The September 2010 class has almost reached 100% participation within months of completing their initial

training. The January class is on a similar path.

Funders stepped up with us, like Hurt, Gogian, SHARE, RGK, Weingart, BCM, McCoy and many others!!

We all need to step up and ask those around us to step up with us in support of CASA work. If we want a healthy flagship CASA program in Los Angeles County, it is up to us.

We all are painfully aware that there are 25,000 children in foster care in Los Angeles County, in dire circumstances. *We need to serve more children, to make more of a difference, to secure CASA's legacy for the next 30 years.*

Remind people that CASA serves about 8,000 foster children each year, 500-600 with ongoing individual advocacy, and another 7500 unaccompanied children at court with one-day counseling and accompaniment to first-time and follow-up court hearings. Another 350 foster teen girls participate in Glamour Gowns every year.

Today CASA/LA functions as an independent private non-profit program and continues to serve the LAC Dependency Court by recruiting, training and supporting volunteer Child Advocates for appointment to underserved children in the foster care system.

In our first fiscal year as an exclusively non-profit community supported program we have served YTD (July- Dec 2010):

- 450 children with ongoing individual advocacy services.
- 4921 children with 1st day court orientation and follow-up hearings.
- 50 new volunteers with initial pre-service training
- 370 existing volunteers with continuing education
- 25 volunteer court assistants with training and continuing education
- 30 volunteers with training for new roles as case assessors, peer support coaches, interviewers, trainers, office support.

Towards our \$2mm annual budget: we have:

- \$900,000 secured in federal funds
- \$500,000 in foundation grants & individual donations
- \$1.4MM raised YTD
- **\$600,000 still to raise by June 2011**

So ask yourself, what can I do? What can we do together?

Thanks for your lively participation in our Progress Conversations March 8, 9, and 10. Keep your great ideas coming.

-Cheers, Dilys



CASA OF LOS ANGELES BULLETIN BOARD

Reminders for all CASAs!

Court Badges:

All CASA volunteers are now required to have a **PICTURE ID** badge at all times at the Monterey Park and Antelope Valley offices. If you do not have a headshot picture ID on your CASA badge, please stop by our office so that we can take a picture and prepare one for you!



Sign-in Clipboard:

Please remember to sign-in and out every time you come into the CASA Monterey Park Office. We need to know who is coming into the office for tracking and security purposes. Thank you for your cooperation!

Update your insurance information with us

If your auto insurance has **expired within the past 6 months**, please be sure to e-mail, fax, or mail us a copy of your new insurance card. This information is needed to comply with the rules of our supervising agencies. E-mail it to Kelli at krasmus@casala.org or fax to 323-264-5020.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding any of the following CASA/LA housekeeping issues, feel free to contact us at 323-526-6666 or e-mail An Le at ale@casala.org.

Children's Court Parking

is now \$5.00 in Monterey Park

Please remember to bring \$5.00 in cash upon entrance into the Children's Court parking structure. We will continue to validate your parking ticket, so make sure to bring it into our office for validation!

Continuing Education Opportunities:

Trading Secrets:

Working Together for Individuals with Dual Diagnosis Involved in the Criminal Justice System

Wednesday, March 9, 2011
Hilton Mission Valley
901 Camino Del Rio South
San Diego, CA 92108

Presented by: Solutions Building Community Collaborative

ICAN 7th Annual

California Conference

Childhood Grief and Traumatic Loss:
Restoring Joy to Children and Families

March 23, 2011

The Pasadena Convention Center
300 East Green Street
Pasadena, CA 91101

Presented by: The Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect

If you would like to attend any of the following, please refer to the **Monday CASA Buzz** or contact Jaren Sorkow at 323-526-6306 or jsorkow@casala.org for more information.

Upcoming March 2011 In-Services:

Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care

Wednesday, March 9th, 2011

12 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.

McCourtney Juvenile Justice Center

Conference Room

1040 West Avenue J, Room 1142

Lancaster, CA 93534

Please RSVP to 661-723-2272

Presented by: Dr. Gail Blesi, Ph.D.

CASA Report Writing &

Computer Technology

Monday, March 28, 2010

12 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Monterey Park CASA Conference Room

Presented by: Louise Bieschke & Dana Johnson,
CASA Program Supervisors, and An Le, CASA/
AmeriCorps Volunteer Support Associate



Monterey Park Holiday Party



Antelope Valley Holiday Party



A Peek at Some of the 2011 Graduated CASAs with the Honorable Judge Nash



2011 NATIONAL CASA CONFERENCE

"Building HOPE for Youth"

March 19-22, 2011, Chicago, IL.

www.casaforchildren.org



Conference registration is now available online! Join more than 1,400 child advocates from across the country to gain knowledge that will help you build hope for the youth we serve!

If you are planning to attend the 2011 National CASA Conference, please let us know! Contact **Jaren Sorkow, Director of Volunteer Services**, at sorkow@casala.org.

SAVE THE
DATES!

2011 Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon

Tuesday, May 3, 2011

12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.

The California Endowment
1000 North Alameda Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012



In honor of your dedication and contribution towards CASA of Los Angeles and the children we serve, we would like to invite you to our annual Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon. More details will come so stay tuned!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Upcoming Court Holidays

- ◆ **Thurs., March 31 - Cesar Chavez Day**
- ◆ **Mon., May 30 - Memorial Day**
- ◆ **Mon., July 4 - Independence Day**
- ◆ **Mon., Sept. 5 - Labor Day**

Calendar of Events:

March 2011

Wednesday, March 9th, 2011, 12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.
In-Service: Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC)
McCourtney Juvenile Justice Center Conference Room
1040 West Avenue J, Room 1142; Lancaster, CA 93534
Please RSVP to 661-723-2272

Monday, March 14, 2011, 2:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Orientation for Prospective CASAs
CASA Conference Room, Monterey Park

Saturday-Tuesday, March 19-22, 2011
"Building Hope for Youth"
National CASA Conference
Chicago, IL

Wednesday, March 23, 2011
ICAN 7th Annual California Conference
"Childhood Grief & Traumatic Loss: Restoring Joy to Children & Families"
The Pasadena Convention Center
300 East Green Street; Pasadena, CA 91101

Thursday, March 28, 2011, 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.
In-Service: CASA Report Writing & Computer Technology
CASA Conference Room, Monterey Park

April 2011

Saturday, April 16, 2011
Glamour Gowns Event
Los Angeles Convention Center

Thursday, April 21, 2011, 2:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Orientation for Prospective CASAs
CASA Conference Room, Monterey Park

May 2011

Tuesday, May 3, 2011, 12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.
2011 Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon
The California Endowment

CASA/LA Spring Pre-Service Training Dates:

Monterey Park Office:

Tuesday., Apr. 26, 8:30am-4:30pm
Thursday., Apr. 28, 8:30am-4:30pm
Thursday., May 5, 8:30am-4:30pm
Tuesday, May 10, 8:30am-4:30pm
Thursday, May 12, 8:30am-4:30pm

Antelope Valley Office:

Monday-Friday, May 9-13, 6pm - 9pm
Saturday, May 14, 9am - 5:00pm
Monday, May 16, 8:30am - 2:00pm
Tuesday, May 17, 8:30am - 2:00pm

The mission of CASA of Los Angeles is to improve the lives of the children in the dependency court system through trained, dedicated, and effective volunteer advocates who are professionally supported by an experienced staff.

Board of Directors

| | |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>President</i> | Bruce Herron |
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| <i>Secretary</i> | Joanne Solov |
| | Steve Bloom, Esq. |
| | Cathleen Cobb |
| | Jacque Dolan |
| | Mia Gorman |
| | Sue Marshall |
| | Michael Pappas, Esq. |
| | Daniel Silva |
| | Anneli Stone |
| | Pat Trendacosta, Esq. |

Monterey Park Office

Edelman Children's Court
201 Centre Plaza Drive, Room 1100
Monterey Park, CA 91754-2142
Phone (323) 526-6666
Fax (323) 264-5020
www.casala.org

Executive Director Dilys Tosteson Garcia

Development Director John Charnay
Development Coordinator Yael Gittleman

Program Director Sarita F. Carden
Program Managers Lauri Halderman
Carolyn McGee

Program Supervisors Louise Bieschke
Dana Johnson

Program Assistant Angela Penaredondo

Volunteer Services Director Jaren Sorkow
Recruitment & Training Associate Chantel Paniagua
Volunteer Support Associate An Le
Volunteer Support Associate Kelli Rasmus

Business Manager Melvy Murguia
Intern Ken Sok

Antelope Valley Office

McCourtney Juvenile Justice Center
1040 W. Avenue J, Room 1153
Lancaster, CA 93534-3329
Phone (661) 723-2272
Fax (661) 723-2219

Program Manager Melinda Murphy
Program Supervisor Rebekah Wilson
Program Assistant Jasmine McClendon
Volunteer Support Associate Danica Sherman

Honorary Advisory Board

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Edward P. Roski, Jr., <i>Chair</i> | Michaela Pereira |
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| Kerry McCluggage | Doug Weld |

Honorable Peter Giannini, Founding Judge,
Los Angeles Child Advocates
Hal Brown, Founding Chairman, Friends of Child Advocates
(Deceased)

EVERY DONATION HELPS THE CHILDREN OF OUR COMMUNITY

☐ Yes, I wish to make a tax-deductible gift in support of CASA of Los Angeles.

☐ \$1,000 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$25 ☐ Other \$ _____

☐ Check included (payable to: CASA of Los Angeles)

☐ Please charge my credit card: ☐ MasterCard ☐ VISA

Card Number: _____ Exp.: _____ CVV: _____

Authorized Signature: _____

Name: _____ Company: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

This gift is in: ☐ memory of: _____

☐ honor of: _____

Occasion: ☐ birthday ☐ wedding ☐ anniversary ☐ other

Please send an acknowledgement card to: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

OR make a secure online donation at: www.casala.org

☐ I would like to receive announcements and information via e-mail
(must include e-mail address above).

Your donation to CASA of Los Angeles is tax deductible to the extent the law allows.

Our Tax Identification Number is: 95-3890446.

Thank you!



CASA OF LOS ANGELES
EDMUND D EDELMAN CHILDREN'S COURT
201 CENTRE PLAZA DR STE 3
MONTEREY PARK CA 91754-2142

PLACE
STAMP
HERE



CASA of Los Angeles' mission is to improve the lives of children in the dependency court system through trained, dedicated, and effective volunteer advocates who are professionally supported by experienced staff.

Our vision is that one day, every child in the Los Angeles Dependency Court system has a CASA volunteer.



Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

CASA OF LOS ANGELES